



YOUTH AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN

***Preliminary review of provisions on Youth Employment and Employability
within Caribbean National Youth Policies***



**COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME CARIBBEAN CENTRE
COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT**

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Introduction

This paper is prepared for the Commonwealth Conference *Investing in Youth: Exploring Strategies for Sustainable Employment*. It provides a snapshot of the policy provisions and strategies for youth employment and employability that are contained in National Youth Policies of the Commonwealth Caribbean.

Purpose and Objectives of Report

Given the reported high incidences of youth unemployment, the gendered aspect of Caribbean youth unemployment, the explicit, cultural and / or implied biases to the employment of young people, the concerns of readiness for employment in relation to qualification, job market preparedness, skills and technological savvy, this Paper examines a sampling of Caribbean National to assess:

1. What salient provisions exist to facilitate Youth Employment and Employability?
2. What special provisions if any are made to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship?
3. Are programmes targeted specifically to youth who need support?
4. What could be general gaps to be managed in addressing youth employment and employability?

Status of Youth Policies

Written National Youth Policies exist in the following countries: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize Cayman Islands, Dominica, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and Turks and Caicos. The Commonwealth Caribbean countries currently actively reviewing or drafting national youth policies are The Bahamas, Belize and Guyana. The most recent policy document is the Barbados Youth Policy, which was completed in March 2011. While several other countries are due to review or update their youth policies, the current scenario in four countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean is not reported.¹

All existing youth policy documents referred to above contain provisions for youth employment and employability. The other thematic areas universally covered are education, and health².

For the purpose of this review, the provisions of seven Youth Policy³ documents have been specifically referenced.

Salient provisions existing to facilitate Youth Employment and Employability

Youth Policies generally promote the creation of mechanisms to increase the level of youth employment and employability as well as the promotion of life-long learning and self development. They also particularly advocate for an education system that is relevant to the needs of youth, to potential employers, emerging employment markets and global technologies.

There has been some attempt made to specifically point out the importance of the following:-

1. Sports as an industry that creates employment

¹ There is no current known Youth Policy or drafting in progress in Grenada, Canada, St. Kitts and Nevis and the Virgin Islands

² A breakdown of thematic areas in NYPs is at the Annex

³ Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Jamaica, , St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago

2. Cultural Industries, which are the fastest growing industries in the world. They currently represent 7% of the world's GDP.
3. Agriculture, with implications for enhancing land access for youth.

Strategies

The National Youth Policies' most common strategies relating to employment, entrepreneurship and employability:

- **Facilitate** re-engineering of the education system, including the infrastructure, so that education becomes more accessible to all young persons
- **Focus** attention to the education needs of special groups (physically challenged, young males, at risk youth, out of school youth, special needs, artistic youth, women, rural youth)
- **Increasing accessibility** to youth entrepreneurship more accessible to special youth cohorts (physically challenged, young males, at risk youth, out of school youth, special needs, women, rural youth)
- **Supporting** revision of the education system to address the diverse needs and support the varied aspirations of its student clientele
- **Equipping** youth with the necessary social, life and technical skills for the job market.
- Intensification of culture and technology- based approaches to learning and skills development.
- **Providing** the foundation for the business and economic infrastructure to attract greater investment and enhanced opportunities for youth employment.
- **Promoting** culture, sport and agriculture as mechanisms for employment and income generation.
- **Facilitate** the training in ICTs for youth income generation and in preparation for the world of work.
- **Promoting** self-employment as a viable alternative to traditional employment.
- **Fostering** a culture of entrepreneurship and increasing the number of support mechanisms for entrepreneurs
- **Promoting and providing** on-the-job training opportunities, apprenticeships, work experience and placement programmes;
- **Encouraging** research and planning for training and skills sets and qualifications that are needed on the job market.
- **Fostering** direct linkages between the education and employment sectors.
- **Reengineering** of national apprenticeship or service programmes that also address work ethics / healthy attitudes to work, productivity, civic responsibility and nation building in general.

National Youth Policy Provisions: *Investment in Youth Employment and Employability*

Part 1

Employability: Addressing Technical Skills Mismatches

“Offsetting the mismatch of technical skills among youth entails facilitating access to vocational training, creating an enabling environment for the development and expansion of competitive job training and providing effective active labour market programmes to unemployed youth and youth living in isolated areas where the market does not reach. It may also involve workplace training schemes, the creation or improvement of apprenticeships/internships systems, the promotion of subsidized training programmes that provide financial incentives to employers for in-service training and the delivery of entrepreneurship skills training for youth seeking self-employment options.” (ILO, 2010)

	Through Access to Vocational Training Programmes	In-Classroom, In-School Training	On-the-Job Training
Anguilla			*
Antigua and Barbuda			
Barbados		*	*
Belize	*		*
Cayman Islands	*		*
Dominica	*		
Jamaica			
Montserrat			
St Lucia		*	*
St Vincent and the Grenadines			
Trinidad and Tobago	*		
TOTAL	4	2	5

Part 2

Employability: Addressing Non-Technical Skills Mismatches

“Non-technical skills comprise insufficient numeracy and literacy skills. A mismatch at this level creates significant disadvantages in the labour market and requires the active participation of governments in improving the standards and facilitating access for youth to general education and skills training within and outside the formal education system. Non-technical skills also involve soft and life skills (which go to the core of behaviours and attitudes of youth towards the work environment) and require training on communication, leadership, capacity to work in teams, motivation and discipline”. (ILO, 2010)

	Soft and Life Skills Training	Teacher Training	Guaranteeing Programme; Curricular performance standards; Strengthening of technical/vocational curriculum	Institutional Capacity, Accessibility and Performance (Academic)
Anguilla	*	*		*
Antigua and Barbuda	*	*		*
Barbados		*	*	*
Belize				
Cayman Islands	*	*	*	
Dominica	*			
Jamaica	*			
Montserrat	*		*	*
St Lucia	*		*	
St Vincent and the Grenadines				
Trinidad and Tobago	*			
TOTAL	8	4	4	4

Part 3

Employment Creation: Addressing slow job growth barriers

“The lack of labour demand prompted by insufficient growth has a significant impact on involuntary unemployment and discouragement, particularly among youth. It remains the toughest barrier to tackle, particularly in developing economies. While there are other macroeconomic and investment climate aspects that play a role in addressing employment growth, active labour market measures such as wage and training subsidies as well as public works programmes can motivate employers to hire young people as well as to counteract the excess labour supply of young workers in times of crisis” (ILO, 2010)

	Wage and/or training governmental subsidies	In-School Counseling and Job Search Advice	Public Works/Temporary Employment Programmes/Youth Job Corps	Investment in Alternative Sectors
Anguilla	*	*		
Antigua and Barbuda	*			*
Barbados		*	*	*
Belize				*
Cayman Islands		*	*	*
Dominica				
Jamaica			*	*
Montserrat			*	*
St Lucia		*	*	
St Vincent and the Grenadines				
Trinidad and Tobago			*	*
TOTAL	2	4	6	7

Part 4

Equal Opportunities: Addressing youth-discrimination/deficiencies in the labour market and Inadequate Job Matching

A number of measures to counteract discrimination towards youth include affirmative action programmes and employee mentoring. Matching failures occur frequently among youth who often lack relevant information and access to networks that can help them find the right job for their skills. (ILO, 2010)

	Affirmative Action/ Youth Economic Participation Programmes	Employee mentoring/ Use of retirees for training	Employment and intermediation services, direct Job-Search Assistance	Skills Certification Systems/ competency Based Certification and Skills, Quality Assurance	Inclusion of vulnerable groups
Anguilla	*		*	*	*
Antigua and Barbuda	*				*

Barbados					*
Belize				*	*
Cayman Islands	*	*			*
Dominica	*				*
Jamaica					*
Montserrat			*		*
St Lucia		*	*		*
St Vincent and the Grenadines			*		*
Trinidad and Tobago			*		*
TOTAL	4	2	4	1	11

Part 5

Facilitating Entrepreneurship: Addressing lack of access to start-up capital and deficiencies in preparing youth for successful and innovative business ventures

	Comprehensive entrepreneurship programmes	Demand-Driven Skills Training	Mentoring	Financial Support; Access to and Provisions for accessing Financial Capital	Promoting Self Employment and Youth Innovation
Anguilla		*		*	
Antigua and Barbuda		*		*	
Barbados		*	*	*	*
Belize	*			*	
Cayman Islands			*		*
Dominica	*			*	*
Jamaica	*	*		*	*
Montserrat					
St Lucia			*		
St Vincent and the Grenadines				*	
Trinidad and Tobago		*			
TOTAL	3	5	3	7	4

Gaps

The **National Youth Policy** is the critical policy instrument for youth development ostensibly relative to all sectors of development. Working with Ministries of Labour and other key stakeholders to develop special National Youth Employment Action Plans may be a useful mechanism to mainstream youth employment ensure the necessary linkages for labour supply and demand and enunciate specific micro enterprise policy.

It is noteworthy that some of the recommendations for building the MSE capacity in Caribbean countries (ILO 2006 Report) are already contained in youth policies, for example:

1. Introduction of entrepreneurial education in the school curriculum. Entrepreneurial training for school children currently exists in some countries, such as Dominica as the “**Catch Them Young**” programme in primary and secondary schools, and emerging initiatives in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.
2. Programmes to identify prospective entrepreneurs and business opportunities
3. Training in new skills and upgrading existing skills implementation
4. Development of exclusive entrepreneurship development and enterprise in schools and for youth
5. Management programmes for women, youth and other disadvantaged groups (special youth cohorts)

In addition, based on the analysis of youth unemployment against existing policy provisions, there may be need for further attention to:

- Creation of measures to link unemployed young men and women to employment related information, job access and opportunities.
- More focus on science and technology (not only ICT) as a means towards sustainable livelihoods, to foster innovation in entrepreneurship and more commercial entrepreneurship.
- Proper and effective dissemination of information on agencies that provide support for entrepreneurship start up and assistance to young entrepreneurs.
- More research and planning for training and qualifications that are relevant to the job market
- Expanding and strengthen the existing TVET programmes at schools to meet new job market needs and in relation to innovative industries.
- Ensuring the quality and certification for TVET programmes.
- Promoting green entrepreneurship and involving youth in environmental public environment schemes
- Establishment of national micro and small enterprises boards/ youth entrepreneurship associations
- Implementation of innovative youth friendly financial schemes
- Integrating science and technology-based institutions and innovations with the youth business sector.
- Developing infrastructural support services such as Incubators/ Business Development Centres.
- Integrating human resource development strategy to situate youth for the sustainable development of the country.

Areas for elaboration at Caribbean Consultation

The foregoing preliminary review is meant to stimulate discussion and tease out recommendations for updating the policy environment and strategies available in the Region to support and promote the economic participation of young people.

The Conference may want to examine the following:-

- The extent to which policy provisions are successfully mitigating employment and employability concerns.
- The implications for new evidenced-based provisions to meet employment and employability issues- what's lacking, how do we address the gaps?
- Is there merit in developing specific youth employment action plans?
- What are the critical inter-sectoral linkages to produce success outcomes in youth employment and employability?
- Revamping skills programmes and unleashing creativity and innovation- how?
- Good practice in employment and employability that can be used as benchmarks for replication.
- Capacity development and institutional strengthening issues- who needs what?
- Leveraging smarter partnerships for youth entrepreneurship programmes

Conclusion

Addressing gaps or omissions in policy provisions will not be the panacea to produce an equitable and strategic framework for youth economic participation in the Region.

Issues of capacity and connectivity within Departments of Youth are critical to any success in this direction, and must also be addressed. It is already documented that the capacity and institutional systems in Youth Ministries and Departments of the Region must be enhanced. Creating the value-based partnerships with other government departments and private sector will rely on resources, aggressiveness and leveraging power that Youth Departments and Ministries do not currently possess.

The extent, therefore, to which development partners must attach discrete support for strengthening Youth Ministries and Departments to national initiatives for youth entrepreneurship and employability, should therefore be revisited.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme continues to emphasize the importance of the mainstreamed approach to youth development in addressing regional and global issues of youth empowerment. Genuine youth participation will necessitate that governments and participating strategic partners in NGOs, development agencies and the private sector must develop a sense of, methodology and organizational sensitivity for youth mainstreaming so that young people, who have a right to decent and productive work, and who should dream dreams, find the legitimate means to realize their dreams.

Annex: Showing themes covered for youth cohorts in a sample of Caribbean Youth Policies

	Anguilla 13-30 yrs	Antigua/ Barbuda 0-35 yrs	Cayman Islands 10-25 yrs	Dominica 15- 35 yrs	Jamaica 15-24 yrs.	Montserrat 10-30 yrs	St Lucia 10- 35 yrs	St Vincent 15-30 yrs	Trinidad and Tobago 12 – 29 yrs
Youth Employment	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Education	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Youth in special circumstances and disabled	√	√				√		√	
Sport and Culture	√		√	√		√	√	√	√
Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Crime, drugs and Violence	√	√	√	√		√	√		
Youth Protection		√			√				√
Gender Equity		√							√
Youth Participation	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√
Youth Empowerment									√
Sustainable Development									√
Civic Responsibility			√	√					
Personal Development, Family				√	√				
Religion						√	√		

Extract of Youth Employment Provisions in select Caribbean Youth Policies

Anguilla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Implementation of Initiatives that increase the participation of young people in the economy and other aspects of island life (culture, sports, etc.) ◆ Provision of opportunities for experience and skill acquisition for young people to allow them access to employment opportunities. ◆ Commensurate wages with employment type and level ◆ Ensure gender equity in wages ◆ Establishment of Safety nets for young employees, in particular those who are teen parents
Antigua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Job creation ◆ School to work transition programmes ◆ Entrepreneurship ◆ Technical support for young entrepreneurs ◆ Skills training ◆ Career and life planning ◆ Career Fairs ◆ Cooperative endeavours ◆ Job availability ◆ Job market research ◆ Apprenticeship ◆ Accessing start-up capital ◆ Special initiatives targeting youth with disabilities and those transitioning from rehabilitation centres
Cayman Islands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Legislate that all employment vacancies are registered with the Department of Labour; ◆ Advertise training and employment opportunities in places which young people frequent; ◆ Devise incentive schemes to motivate young women and men to pursue training opportunities and to excel in their chosen careers; ◆ Ensure that ongoing training opportunities are always accessible to local staff; ◆ Encourage equity and parity for young people; ◆ Develop and enforce legislation which provides for the training up and promotion of local staff; ◆ Appoint an officer(s) to monitor the recruitment policies and practices of employers and to provide information for penalising negligent employers; ◆ Lobby statutory, private and voluntary organisations to have youth representation on their boards, management committees or other governing bodies.
Dominica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Pursue initiatives that increase the participation of young people in the economy and other aspects of life in the country: culture, sports and so on. ◆ Create opportunities for young people to acquire the skills and experience required to access existing and future employment opportunities. ◆ Wages to be made commensurate with employment type and level and gender equity in wages will exist for all young people. ◆ Safety nets for young employees and in particular those who are teen parents to be established or facilitated. ◆ The gaps in employment opportunities between rural and urban areas in Dominica to be narrowed and so increase the life chances of rural youth. ◆ Disabled young people will be given every opportunity consistent with their abilities to participate in the economy.
Jamaica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Increase the employability of youth ◆ Advocacy for relevant educational and skills training opportunities in the formal and NGO sectors ◆ Promoting on-the-job training opportunities, work experience and placement programme ◆ Encouraging research and planning for training and qualifications that are relevant to the job market ◆ Fostering direct linkages between the education and employment sectors ◆ Increasing the number of employment opportunities for youth ◆ Promoting incentives for employers who employ inexperienced youths; ◆ Promoting youth innovations in the agricultural, cultural and technological industries in Jamaica ◆ Fostering an environment conducive to creation of opportunities for self-employment ◆ Advocating for the strengthening of loan programmes to facilitate access to youth friendly credit ◆ Fostering training in the areas of entrepreneurship and enterprise development for youth (in and out of school) ◆ Promoting self-employment as a viable alternative to traditional employment

<p style="text-align: center;">Montserrat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provision of Skills training in a variety of new and traditional areas in order to increase the employment opportunities of young people. Agricultural science, information technology and small business are among the areas that may be explored. ◆ Equipping the Labour Department to function as an Employment Agency that provides young men and women with information about job opportunities. ◆ Establishment of a Self-employment Agency through the National Development Foundation and the Government Development Unit that researches the feasibility of investment projects and access to funds for young entrepreneurs. ◆ New and traditional agricultural technologies to be introduced to youths as well as to established farmers. ◆ Promotion of youth Entrepreneurship and business management training ◆ Focus on vocational training at the secondary school and the Community College. A broad curriculum to include technical subjects should be implemented. ◆ Establishment of a comprehensive careers guidance counseling programme for all secondary school students. (Jobs in technical fields need special focus). ◆ Involvement of Young men and women in economic planning for the country through their youth council and related institutions. ◆ Establishment of an apprenticeship programme to include the transfer of experience and skills of retirees to youth. ◆ Establishment of a minimum wage to prevent the exploitation of youth labour. ◆ Government collaborates with the private sector in an effort to generate employment opportunities for young persons. ◆ Minimization of the employment of retirees. Employment of persons in this group should be linked with training and succession planning. ◆ Greater media publicity be given to the concerns of youths in the area of training and employment.
<p style="text-align: center;">St Lucia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Skills training should be provided to increase youth employment and employability. ◆ Entrepreneurship should be actively and aggressively promoted among youth. ◆ Creation of an Employment Agency that provides unemployed young men and women information about job opportunities. ◆ Credit facilities should be made more readily accessible with minimum prerequisites to create an environment that nurtures entrepreneurship. ◆ The establishment of a Self-employment Agency supported by government and non-governmental organizations that researches the feasibility of individual investment and accesses all aspects of collateral thereby facilitating loans for young entrepreneurs. ◆ Proper and effective dissemination of information on agencies that provide assistance to young entrepreneurs. ◆ Promote and encourage programs that harness the entrepreneurial skills of student such as the Junior Achievement Program. ◆ Good work ethics must be infused in our youth through workshops, seminars organized by the private/public sectors, non-governmental organizations, youth groups and other such organizations. ◆ An intensive Apprenticeship Program, specifically for out-of-school youth who did not have access to secondary education ◆ Employment of retirees should not be encouraged by the public sector. While retirees are retained, many youths who are qualified cannot find a job. ◆ Young men and women should be involved in the decision-making process that plans pension programs for retirees. ◆ It is highly recommended that job training be given greater attention at secondary school. ◆ The Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Education must create job-training schemes during the senior years of students at secondary school. ◆ Provision of mandatory career guidance counseling program for all secondary schools. ◆ Transfer the experience and skills of retirees to youth in productive ways.
<p style="text-align: center;">St. Vincent and the Grenadines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Incentives be created so that more youths are encouraged to become involved in agricultural endeavors ◆ The National Land Reform Programme be modified to allow for an equitable distribution of lands to youths, reflecting the demographic composition of areas under consideration ◆ Increased, organized efforts should be directed towards locating and securing markets and better prices for agricultural produce, and ◆ Serious exploration of linkage industries. ◆ Conditions be created for the growth and development of the cooperative sector and self-employment initiatives among youths: ◆ Credit facilities must be established with consideration given to lowering interest rates below prime commercial levels; ◆ Consideration be given to the provision of subsidies (eg. For inputs, raw materials, tools, machinery);

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Training in appropriate management (styles, modes, etc.) must be provided or encouraged; ◆ Sustained effort be undertaken to encourage local private sector investment in manufacturing, and service industries so as to widen the employment base, thus providing increased opportunity for youths;
Trinidad and Tobago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Strengthening of the institutional framework for the conduct of periodic labour market surveys to ensure that there is a proper match between skill acquisition and job market requirements. ◆ Development of a youth employment policy. ◆ Provision of the business and economic infrastructure to attract greater investment and enhanced opportunities for youth employment. ◆ Diversification of the economy toward the development of the informal sector with emphasis on non-traditional areas of employment. ◆ Creation of mechanisms which would ensure that youth are equipped with the necessary social, life and technical skills for the job market. ◆ The promotion of culture and sport as mechanisms for employment and income generation. ◆ Ensure that private and public sector organizations provide opportunities for young people to obtain employment-related education and training. ◆ Ensure that young people with disabilities are employable and employed